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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: AUGUST 24, 2009

Summary: Reports on national political developments dominated headlines in all major dailies on Monday. Interior Minister Rehman Malik's statement claiming the "killing of Baitullah Mehsud's in-laws by Taliban militants on suspicion of spying for the U.S." received front page coverage in all newspapers. Newspapers also highlighted U.S. Admiral Mullen's statement that he made in a TV talk show that the "situation in Afghanistan was serious and deteriorating but that trend could be reversed." Reports of a suicide blast in Peshawar that killed three persons including two women received prominent display. The weekend editions of several newspapers ran President Obama's message to the Muslim world to mark the Islamic month of Ramadan.

Commenting on the recent remarks of Secretary of State Clinton, the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" in its editorial, noted that "it appears that the U.S. is looking to invest in the future of the people here and perhaps put behind it the 'transactional relationship' of years past." The populist, often sensational national English daily "The News," observed that "Clinton's statement is as close as the U.S. is going to come to admitting that it made a mistake in the way it funded its relationship with us historically." However, the second-largest, Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" underlined the need to "resist the U.S. effort to change its Embassy in Islamabad into a military base." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Taliban Killed Baitullah Mehsud's In-Laws For Spying: Malik" "Daily Times" (08/24)

"The Taliban have killed Baitullah Mehsud's father-in-law and other relatives on suspicion of spying on the former Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan chief, Interior Minister Rahman Malik said on Sunday, APP reported. Malik told a foreign TV channel in an interview that he had credible information to this effect."

"U.S. Sees Afghan War Situation Getting Worse" "Dawn" (08/24)

"America's top military commander and a leading Republican politician acknowledged on Sunday that the situation in Afghanistan was serious and was deteriorating but hoped that the trend could be reversed. In interviews to CNN, NBC and ABC television channels, Admiral Mike Mullen and Senator John McCain also conceded that the American public was getting wary of the war but hoped that this too could be reversed."

"Holbrooke 'Expects' Disputes Over Afghan Election" "Daily Times" (08/24)

"Allegations of rigging and fraud are expected in the Afghan presidential election, US Special Envoy to Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke said on Sunday. Holbrooke told AP Television News in the western city of Herat that observers should wait for the official complaints process to run its course before judging the vote's legitimacy."

"Three Die As Militants Attack Rival's Family" "Dawn" (08/24)

"Two women and a man were killed and 15 people were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up after a botched attempt to attack families of a member of a rival organization in Momin Town on Sunday. Police found the head and the legs of the bomber. The powerful blast damaged about 10 houses."

"Obama's Message on Start of Ramazan" "The News" and "Jang" (08/23)

"President Barrack Obama is continuing his outreach to the world's Muslims in a video message to mark the start of Islamic holy month of Ramadan. In the message posted on the White House website, Obama says that rituals of Ramazan are a reminder of the principals Muslims and Christians have in common. He says those principals include advancing justice, progress, tolerance and dignity of all human beings."

"New TTP Chief Yet To Be Appointed, Says Wali" "Dawn" (08/24)

"Taliban fighters in Pakistan are committed to helping the fight in Afghanistan and consider Barack Obama their "number one enemy," a top commander said amid uncertainty about whether a new leader had been appointed to head the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Waliur Rehman made the remarks in an interview with the Associated Press at a time of intense speculation over the next leader of the Al Qaeda-allied group. A CIA missile strike on Aug 5 is believed to have killed former TTP chief Baitullah Mehsud. Rehman, a cousin of Baitullah, is seen as a strong candidate for the post."

"Omar Not In Quetta" "The News" (08/24)

"Inspector General Frontier Corps Baluchistan Maj.Gen. Saleem Nawaz has refuted claims that the Taliban leader Mulla Omar is in Quetta."

"40 Held, 12 Surrender In Swat" "The News" (08/24)

"Forty suspected persons were arrested in a search operation while 12 militants surrendered to the authorities in various parts of the Swat valley on Sunday. Official sources said the security forces launched search operation in Manglore area, arresting 40 suspects."

"Seven LJ Activists Arrested" "Dawn" (08/24)

"Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested seven members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, a proscribed organization involved in attacks on former president Gen Pervez Musharraf and former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz."

"Pak Issues Global Alert For 26/11 Fugitive" "Daily Times" (08/24)

"Pakistan has asked Interpol member countries to help find 13 fugitives wanted by authorities in connection with the Mumbai terror attacks."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Helping Pakistan," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (08/24)

"Asked in an interview for the New York Times Magazine whether American military aid could "have been better spent on education and healthcare for girls and women", US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton replied: "Yes. The answer is yes." And referring to the

Kerry-Lugar/Berman non-military aid in the pipeline, Ms Clinton added: 'we hope to try to make up for lost time.' The secretary's comments have come on the same weekend that a team of American experts arrived here to assess the country's ailing power sector and begin work on a long-term solution to the recurring crisis. Taken together, it appears that the US is looking to invest in the future of the people here and perhaps put behind it the 'transactional relationship' of years past...Pakistan must wait and see what the Obama administration comes up with finally in terms of non military aid to Pakistan. There are some obvious hurdles, not least the fact that the security environment in the country is not conducive to the large-scale presence of non-military American experts. So even if the American will is genuine - and Washington will have to a lot more to convince Pakistanis that it is - that will not easily translate into meaningful, long-term commitments on the ground."

"Convergences," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/24)

"President Zardari has talked of extremists in NWFP as being 'defeated and scattered' and...spoke of nobody being allowed to take the law into their own hands.... Our president may have failed to notice that people take the law into their own hands in Pakistan with complete impunity every day, and it is widely tolerated and even condoned.... Clintons' statement [in almost uncanny harmony] is as close as the U.S. is going to come to admitting that it made a mistake in the way it funded its relationship with us historically. The failure to recognize that education was as much a key to advancement as were guns and bombs played no small part in the creation of the difficulties we face today. We can defeat extremism if we educate our people - but it will be the work of a generation, not a single government."

"Madrassas Are An Integral Part Of Islamic Culture," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/23)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that Pakistan would be provided funds for education as well so that the children do not turn towards Madrassahs. Hillary held Madrassahs responsible for suicide attacks. Religious schools are not a product of the present circumstances or present times. They have been around for centuries. Alumni from these Madrassahs are playing an important role in promoting and preaching Islam... It is the U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan that created suicide bombers - this was the only effective weapon these hapless people had... Pakistan should reject [any assistance] the U.S. gives in the name of getting Madrassahs closed down."

"Public Concern Over U.S. Activities In Pakistan," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/24)

"There are American, Pakistani and international media reports that American CIA has acquired services of notorious Black water organization to kill opponents of America in Pakistan's mountainous areas. Pakistan's political, social, religious and media circles have expressed concern over the reports.... The mass murders committed by Black water in Iraq and Afghanistan have already been exposed prominently by American media. Black water became known at the time of Marriot explosion and some newspapers and magazines claimed that Black water personnel were also killed in the blast.... The government is duty bound to talk candidly with America in the light of reservations expressed by the people, political and religious circles and Pakistan army's leadership. Black water organization operatives should be expelled from the country. The government should resist the effort to change American Embassy Islamabad into a military base."

"America: The biggest Enemy or Benefactor of Pakistan," an op-ed by Malik Sohail Hussain in daily "Islamabad Times" (cir. 5,000) (08/21)

"U.S.-bashing in Pakistan has become a very effective tool for all and sundry to gain overnight popularity. The U.S. is held solely responsible for all the ills Pakistan is suffering from. Apart from the policies of the Western countries, Pakistani intelligentsia and leaders of religious and political parties have also played a key

role in creating this thinking. According to this section of the Pakistani society, the U.S. always gives priority to its interests and 'deceives us' to achieve this goal. These leaders ignore the fact that every country in the world gives priority to its national interests and the U.S. cannot be vilified if it does so. If the United States is an 'evil,' then why do we rush towards it to ease out our dire needs? Pakistan is the third biggest recipient of the U.S. financial assistance. The United States is the largest importer of Pakistan's textile products, the backbone of our industrial sector. We always look towards Washington to resolve all of our political and financial issues. We beg for the U.S. help to overcome our food and energy crises. It also provides training facilities to our technical experts, police and the armed forces. We request our leaders and politicians to avoid living in ivory towers and face the hard realities. They also bear the responsibility to promote rational ideas among the masses. They should renounce the unwarranted policy of the U.S.-bashing aimed at misguiding the ordinary and naive masses."

"Hakimullah As Taliban Leader," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (08/24)

"Hakimullah Mehsud has been proclaimed as the next chief of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).... However, there are rumors abroad that Hakimullah may not yet be the truly chosen leader and that uncertainty will reign as long as the new leader is not able to show that he has the loyalty of everyone across the FATA and Malakand.... Hakimullah represents the typical breed of long-haired and bearded killers that one sees everywhere in the video coverage of their tribal hideouts. He comes across as a rash swashbuckling fighter who would rather kill than sit down and talk; and not give ground when invited to talks. Above all, he is violently sectarian and, together with Commander Qari Hussain, the most savage of warriors with expertise in producing suicide-bombers, has been the scourge of the Shias of Kurram, cutting them off from the rest of Pakistan. Hakimullah is also known for his slack allegiance to any Islamic ethic. His leadership will give encouragement to the criminal aspects of the TTP from Peshawar to Karachi. Incidents of kidnapping for ransom and bank robberies are expected to increase under him.... Fortunately, however, Hakimullah's outreach is expected to be seriously limited, encouraging the regional commanders to cut loose and be on their own. At the same time, the Pakistan army and the security agencies, now beefed up in numbers and expertise, will have a better chance of taking Hakimullah out or at least prevent his mischief from escalating the way it did under Baitullah."

"Post-Baitullah TTP," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/24)

"It cannot be denied that the successful military operation in Malakand Division, the removal of a ruthless leader like Baitullah from the scene and the arrest of some of his leading lieutenants, have left the militant organization in disarray and certainly put it on the back foot, at least for the time being. But it would be sheer self-deception to believe that decisive victory is round the corner; only a battle has been won and the war, with its multidimensional implications, needs much greater grit and determination to win. The victory needs to be scored not only on the battlefield but also in the minds of men, which unfortunately the scourge of militancy and extremism has taken hold of. . . Some analysts have expressed the view that while Baitullah was focusing only on Pakistan and with a vengeance, Hakimullah might devote an equal amount of energy to Afghanistan to help the resistance put an end to the foreign occupation. This prospect, according to these observers, is causing understandable apprehensions and unease among the Americans. Nevertheless, it would be idle to suggest that the danger of terrorist acts in Pakistan has vanished. Therefore, it must keep its powder dry."

"Mediation On Kashmir: Holbrooke Should Not Worry," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/24)

"American envoy on Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke said that his appointment has nothing to do with the Kashmir dispute and that Pakistan and India should resolve bilateral issues through dialogue.... This is a fact that the Kashmir dispute will not be

resolved by any third party mediation, but rather through plebiscite in Kashmir in keeping with the UN resolutions.... Holbrooke should not worry too much about Kashmir as it is destined to be freed and become a part of Pakistan."

"Truth or reconciliation," an op-ed by Huma Yusuf in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (08/24)

". . . In Mardan, lashkars have openly declared that they will counter kidnappings for ransom by kidnapping residents of villages with militant connections. If the government does not articulate a coherent plan for dealing with known or suspected militants in a post-conflict context, locals will begin to dole out justice on their own terms. Such practices will ensure that the Malakand division remains a lawless region - beyond government writ, but in a different incarnation. The government must first choose between a policy of truth or reconciliation. If militants are to be brought to justice for their actions, the government should stop dangling the carrot of leniency.'

Patterson